

Message Text

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ACTION OES-07

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ISO-00 AID-05 IO-13 AGRE-00 EB-08
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R 191225Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2268
INFO AMEMBASSY MASERU
AMEMBASSY MBABANE

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DEPT PASS AID

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SPOP BC
SUBJ: POPULATION AND FOOD PRODUCTION

REF: STATE 107370

1. IN THE COURSE OF MAY 18 CONVERSATION, I RAISED WITH ACTING PRESIDENT AND MINISTER OF FINANCE AND DEVELOPMENT PLANNING Q.K.J. MASIRE THE SUBSTANCE OF REFTEL, EMPHASIZING THAT EXPERTS PROJECT POPULATION GROWTH WILL OUTSTRIP WORLD FOOD PRODUCTION BY 1985. MASIRE REPLIED BY COMMENTING THAT IN PREPARING FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN NO. V, GOB WAS PLACING A VERY HIGH PRIORITY ON BOTSWANA'S ACHIEVING SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN FOOD PRODUCTION BY THAT YEAR.

2. MASIRE ADDED THAT HE HAD RECENTLY BEEN TO BOTSWANA DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION'S MODEL FARM IN THE TULI BLOCK. IN THE COURSE OF VISIT HE HAD SEEN AN ADJACENT COTTON FARM, "A SMALL FRACTION OF THE SIZE OF CITY OF GABORONE", ON WHICH IS PRODUCED OVER P250,000 WORTH OF COTTON ANNUALLY AND WHICH EMPLOYS 300 PEOPLE. HE ASKED US TO IMAGINE THE TREMENDOUS POTENTIAL

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PRODUCTIVITY IF ALL THE ARABLE LAND IN THE TULI BLOCK COULD BE SO EFFICIENTLY ORGANIZED AND FARMED. HE SAID THE KEY ELEMENT NECESSARY TO STIMULATE USE OF ARABLE LAND WOULD BE IMPROVED ROADS. FARMERS NEED ASSURANCE OF BEING ABLE TO MARKET THEIR PRODUCE IN BOTSWANA RATHER THAN THE TRANSVAAL. HE SAID THAT SUCH DEVELOPMENT WOULD ACHIEVE TWO OF THE NDP'S PRIMARY OBJECTIVES, I.E., INCREASED AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

PLUS THE CREATION OF ADDITIONAL JOBS.

3. MASIRE FURTHER STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF CREATING INCENTIVES FOR FARMERS TO PRODUCE, WHICH MEANS GOB (THROUGH ITS AGRICULTURAL MARKETING BOARD) MUST INTERVENE IN THE MARKET TO ASSURE A STABLE PRICE. PRESENTLY FARMERS SELL AT LOW PRICES DURING HARVEST SEASON; YET SOME FARMERS HAVE TO PAY TWO OR THREE TIMES MORE WHEN THEY BUY THE SAME COMMODITIES AT OTHER TIMES DURING THE YEAR. IN ADDITION TO STABLE PRICES, THERE IS URGENT NEED FOR AN INSTITUTION ABLE TO OFFER FARMERS NECESSARY LOANS TO FINANCE FARMING OPERATIONS. PERMSEC GAOLATHE, WHO WAS PRESENT, URGED GREATER FLEXIBILITY IN USE OF AID FUNDS TO ENABLE GOB TO RESPOND TO URGENT NEEDS WHEN AND WHERE THEY ARISE.

4. IN SEPARATE CONVERSATION ALONG THESE LINES, AND AS EXAMPLE OF THE PRIMACY TO WHICH GOB HAS ACCORDED THE PROBLEM OF FOOD PRODUCTION, MINAG MASISI ON MAY 17 ASKED DCM FOR ASSISTANCE IN THE FORM OF 4-H CLUB EXPERTS TO ORGANIZE BOTSWANA R-B CLUBS INTO FOOD PRODUCTION UNITS, PRESUMABLY ALONG THE LINES OF THE AGRICULTURAL BRIGADES.

5. I AM SENDING MASIRE LETTER ENCOMPASSING THE MAIN POINTS OF REFTTEL TO REINFORCE GOB INITIATIVES TO INCREASE FOOD PRODUCTION AND TO ENCOURAGE DIALOGUE ON THIS SUBJECT. WHILE MASIRE DID NOT ELABORATE ON GOB EFFORTS ON POPULATION CONTROL, AN AID-SUPPORTED, NATIONWIDE PROGRAM OF EDUCATION HAS BEEN SUCCESSFULLY ESTABLISHED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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(MCH/FP) THAT BRINGS INFORMATION AND SERVICES WITHIN RANGE OF GREAT MAJORITY OF PEOPLE IN THE COUNTRY, OR AT LEAST THOSE DESIRING THEM. NORLAND

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